

## **Transportation/HUD Appropriations, Fiscal Year 2008**

### **Amendment XXXX – Prohibits transportation funding from being spent on bicycle trails**

The Fiscal Year 2008 Transportation appropriations bill contains 10 earmarks, totaling \$11,875,000, for bicycle trails and bicycle/pedestrian bridges.

This amendment would prohibit federal transportation dollars—intended to construct and maintain roads and bridges—from being diverted to pay for bicycle paths.

### **Bike Paths Prove Popular with Politicians and as a Result Funding for Deficient Bridges is Neglected**

On August 1, 2007, the Interstate 35 West (I-35W) bridge over the Mississippi River in Minneapolis, Minnesota, collapsed during rush hour, killing 13 people and injuring another 123.

This tragedy exposed both a nationwide problem of deficient bridges as well as misplaced priorities of Congress, which has focused more on funding politician' pet projects than improving aging infrastructure.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), of the 597,340 bridges in the U.S., 154,101 bridges are deficient. This means one out of every eight bridges in our nation is structurally deficient.

“Dozens of the nation's highway bridges that fell into disrepair 25 years ago still need overhauls to fix cracks, corrosion and other long-festering problems,” according to a recent *USA TODAY* analysis of federal inspection records.

“At least 96 interstate highway bridges rated ‘structurally deficient’ by government inspectors in 1982 had the same rating last year,

suggesting they weren't fixed or had lapsed and again require repair, according to the records. Those spans carry 3.8 million cars and trucks every day.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, instead of addressing needed bridge maintenance, Congress has increasingly prioritized earmarks for politicians' pet projects, many which do not even involve roads or bridges.

Bicycle trails are perhaps the most obvious example of such projects that are popular with politicians.

In the 2005 highway funding bill, 70 percent of House members requested bicycling facilities.<sup>2</sup> Over \$17 million was spent on bike path earmarks in Fiscal year 2005, according to the Office of Management and Budget's earmark database.<sup>3</sup>

The Minnesota *Star Tribune* recently reported that House Transportation Committee Chairman Jim "Oberstar's zest for cycling is as great as his enthusiasm for funding public infrastructure. Fact is, the two passions often merge. ... Now, from his powerful perch as chair of the House Transportation Committee, Oberstar has slipped a provision into the Federal Aviation Administration's reauthorization bill that allows airports to spend federal funds on bike storage facilities. The bike industry is cheering the amendment as a victory, but some think it goes too far in writing one's own enthusiasms into law. ... Oberstar estimated that he has helped win funding and approval for at least 60 trails nationwide."<sup>4</sup>

That was before the Minnesota bridge collapse.

Now we know the real consequences of misplaced priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Brad Heath, "Scores of bridges 'deficient' since '80s," USA Today, August 29, 2007; [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-08-29-bridges\\_N.htm?csp=34](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-08-29-bridges_N.htm?csp=34)

<sup>2</sup> Jake Sherman. "Cycling's political tour de finance," Minnesota Star Tribune, July 29, 2007; <http://www.startribune.com/587/story/1331587.html>

<sup>3</sup> Office of Management and Budget website, accessed September 9, 2007; <http://earmarks.omb.gov/>

<sup>4</sup> Jake Sherman. "Cycling's political tour de finance," Minnesota Star Tribune, July 29, 2007; <http://www.startribune.com/587/story/1331587.html>

Yet, the Fiscal Year 2008 Transportation appropriations bill now before the Senate contains 10 earmarks costing nearly \$12 million for bicycle trails.

### **Millions of Transportation Dollars Are Set Aside for Bike Paths in States with Significant Numbers of Deficient Bridges**

Eight states will receive earmarks for bike path earmarks in the 2008 Transportation appropriations bill. Each has a significant number of deficient bridges on the National Highway System.

**Illinois**, which would receive \$3 million for three bike trails earmarks, has 290 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>5</sup> The *Chicago Sun-Times* reports “that the percentage of structurally deficient bridges in Illinois has increased to 9.4 percent. One of those structurally deficient bridges, Interstate 270, carries 54,200 vehicles a day over the Mississippi River near Granite City. ... Chicago area spans in the structurally deficient category include four bridges on Lake Shore Drive and the entire north-south section of Wacker Drive in the Loop. Another bridge, which carries 31st Street over the Illinois Central tracks near the lakefront, has obvious cracks in its support beams.”<sup>6</sup>

**Iowa**, which would receive \$500,000 for the Cemar Trail, has 61 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>7</sup> Two of the interstate highway bridges in Iowa were rated "structurally deficient" by government inspectors in 1982 had the same rating last year, “suggesting they weren't fixed or had lapsed and again require repair, according to the *USA TODAY*.”<sup>8</sup> One is the Little Sioux River bridge that carries Southbound Interstate 29 and has an average daily traffic of 6,100. The other is the North Skunk River bridge that

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<sup>5</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Illinois/Illinois.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Illinois/IL.xls>

<sup>6</sup> Art Golab. “Nearly 1 in 10 Illinois bridges deemed structurally deficient,” *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 3, 2007.

<sup>7</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Iowa/Iowa.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Iowa/IA.xls>

<sup>8</sup> Brad Heath, “Scores of bridges 'deficient' since '80s,” *USA Today*, August 29, 2007; [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-08-29-bridges\\_N.htm?csp=34](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2007-08-29-bridges_N.htm?csp=34)

carries Westbound Interstate 80 that has an average daily traffic of 12,200.<sup>9</sup>

**Maryland**, which would receive \$500,000 for the Gwynns Falls Trail/CSX Bridge, has 43 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>10</sup>

**Mississippi**, which would receive a \$2.2 million earmark for the Statesman Boulevard and Trail, has 28 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>11</sup>

**Missouri**, which would receive a \$750,000 earmark for the Heart of America Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge, has 123 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>12</sup> Only three states have more structurally deficient bridges than Missouri.<sup>13</sup>

**North Dakota**, which would receive an \$800,000 earmark for the Lewis and Clark Legacy Trail, has 9 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>14</sup> Four rural North Dakota bridges have been closed after state inspections that have drawn more attention since a Minnesota bridge collapse, according to the *Bismarck Tribune*. A bridge over the Red River near Drayton was closed for about four days so officials could repair a crack under its deck. Two rural bridges in Cass County have now been closed: a 61-year-old bridge at Durbin and a 54-year-old bridge near Casselton. Both bridges have rotting wood, County Engineer Keith Berndt said.<sup>15</sup>

**Washington**, which would receive \$3,075,000 for three bike trail earmarks, has 76 structurally deficient bridges on the National

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.usatoday.com/news/graphics/deficient-bridges-07/deficient-bridges-map.htm>

<sup>10</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Maryland/Maryland.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Maryland/MD.xls>

<sup>11</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Mississippi/Mississippi.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Mississippi/MS.xls>

<sup>12</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Missouri/Missouri.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Missouri/MO.xls>

<sup>13</sup> Jacob Luecke. "Thousands of Missouri spans 'deficient,'" The Columbia Daily Tribune, August 2, 2007; <http://www.showmenews.com/2007/Aug/20070802News003.asp> <http://www.showmenews.com/2007/Aug/20070802News003.asp>

<sup>14</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/North%20Dakota/North%20Dakota.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/North%20Dakota/ND.xls>

<sup>15</sup> Blake Nicholson. "Four bridges closed following inspections," The Bismarck Tribune, September 6, 2007; <http://www.bismarcktribune.com/articles/2007/09/06/news/state/138873.txt>

Highway System.<sup>16</sup> *The Seattle Times* recently reported that “the steel on downtown Tacoma's Murray Morgan Bridge is so corroded, state engineers want the 1911 drawbridge closed ... Corrosion has eaten holes completely through big steel trusses beneath the bridge deck. But the city has balked, arguing it needs that link to its industrial tidelands. ‘The bridge, in my opinion, is beyond repair,’ said Jugesh Kapur, chief bridge engineer at the state Department of Transportation. ‘We really want to shut it down because we are taking a risk every day by keeping that bridge open.’ ... There remain bridges in the state with unrepaired flaws, from tiny, anonymous one-lane country spans to the heavily used 520 floating bridge.”<sup>17</sup>

**West Virginia**, which would receive a \$1 million earmark for the Paw Paw Bends Trail in Morgan County, has 98 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>18</sup>

The earmarks explicitly listed in this bill, however, are not necessarily the only bike paths that might be funded with federal transportation dollars.

In Chesapeake, **Virginia**, the City Council voted in June to build a two-mile bicycle path estimated to cost \$16 million. Financing for the project is expected to be paid for with federally earmarked dollars with Virginia Department of Transportation matching funds, according to the Public Works spokesperson.<sup>19</sup>

Bridge tenders report as many as five bikers a day use the boulevard where the path would stretch and there are no obvious signs of bike or pedestrian activity on or near the bridge where the path would cross, according to a report Public Works officials made to council before the vote.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Washington/Washington.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Washington/WA.xls>

<sup>17</sup> Warren Cornwall, Justin Mayo and Mike Carter. “A national bridge problem,” *Seattle Times*, August 3, 2007; [http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003819597\\_wabridges03m.html](http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/2003819597_wabridges03m.html)

<sup>18</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/West%20Virginia/West%20Virginia.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/West%20Virginia/WV.xls>

<sup>19</sup> John Hopkins. “Chesapeake to move forward on \$16 million bike path,” *The Virginian-Pilot*, June 15, 2007; <http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=126674&ran=8817>

<sup>20</sup> John Hopkins. “Chesapeake to move forward on \$16 million bike path,” *The Virginian-Pilot*, June 15, 2007; <http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=126674&ran=8817>

Mayor Dalton Edge cast the lone vote against the idea, arguing the money should be used elsewhere. Edge said, "It reminds me of the bridge to nowhere in Alaska.... You talk about government spending, and to spend that kind of money on a bike path that would be rarely utilized is stunning to me."<sup>21</sup>

This \$16 million could clearly be better spent to pay to upgrade the 104 deficient bridges on the National Highway System in Virginia.<sup>22</sup>

Even in **Minnesota**, repairs to the collapsed bridged were put off so politicians could use transportation dollars to pay for bike paths and other non-road related projects.

*The Wall Street Journal* recently reported "Minnesota's transportation auditors warned as long ago as 1990 that there was a 'backlog of bridges that are classified as having structural deficiencies.' In 1999 engineers declared that cracks found in the bridge that collapsed were 'a major concern.' Bike paths were deemed a higher priority by Congress, however, including its powerful Minnesota Representatives."<sup>23</sup>

The Minnesota *Star Tribune* explained that the state's Congressman Jim Oberstar has "long been well-positioned to help steer funds toward bridge safety, and has known of the seriousness of the problem since he held hearings on bridge conditions 20 years ago, he says. But he's had other priorities. For example, on July 25-- a week before the bridge collapse-- Oberstar issued a press release announcing his latest coup for Minnesota. He had obtained more than \$12 million for his home state in a recently passed House transportation and housing bill. Commuter rail was the big winner, getting \$10 million. The Cambridge-Isanti Bike/Walk Trail got \$250,000, and the KidsPeace Mesabi Academy in Buhl got \$150,000.

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<sup>21</sup> John Hopkins. "Chesapeake to move forward on \$16 million bike path," *The Virginian-Pilot*, June 15, 2007; <http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=126674&ran=8817>

<sup>22</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Virginia/Virginia.pdf> and <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Virginia/VA.xls>

<sup>23</sup> "Of Bridges and Taxes," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 18, 2007; <http://www.opinionjournal.com/weekend/hottopic/?id=110010490>

Only \$2 million went for meat-and-potatoes road improvements. Not a penny was slated for bridge repair.”<sup>24</sup>

In Fiscal Year 2005, **Wisconsin** received six earmarks for bicycle paths costing a total of \$10,360,000.<sup>25</sup> The state has 94 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>26</sup>

That same year, **Montana** received a \$5 million earmark through the Federal Highway Administration to “develop and construct transportation enhancements including bicycle/pedestrian trails, landscaping, footbridges, parks, and river access.”<sup>27</sup> The state has 25 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>28</sup>

In the 2005 transportation reauthorization bill, **North Carolina** Congressman David Price earmarked \$2.8 million for bicycle and pedestrian trails in Cary, Durham and Durham County. The North Carolina News & Observer reported that “Since those projects were not in the state plan and did not bring in additional money, other projects in the same highway division will have to be delayed to pay for them.”<sup>29</sup> North Carolina has 153 structurally deficient bridges on the National Highway System.<sup>30</sup>

## **Better Prioritizing of Spending Can Ensure Safer Roads and Bridges**

Substandard road conditions take the lives of more than 13,000 Americans every year, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Katherine Kersten. “Until I-35W disaster, Oberstar's funding focus wasn't on bridges,” Star Tribune, August 22, 2007; <http://www.startribune.com/191/story/1378267.html>

<sup>25</sup> Office of Management and Budget website, accessed September 9, 2007; <http://earmarks.omb.gov/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Wisconsin/WI.xls>

<sup>27</sup> Office of Management and Budget website, accessed September 9, 2007; <http://earmarks.omb.gov/>

<sup>28</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/Montana/MT.xls>

<sup>29</sup> Pat Stith. “Road planning short-circuited in Congress; N.C. delegation's add-ons to highway bills often delay or kill projects in state's long-range plan,” The News & Observer, October 29, 2006; <http://www.newsobserver.com/114/story/504213.html>

<sup>30</sup> <http://transportation.house.gov/bridge%20maps/North%20Carolina/NC.xls>

<sup>31</sup> Jim Davis, executive director and CEO of the American Society of Civil Engineers, <http://www.asce.org/reportcard/index.cfm?reaction=news&page=6>

Every dollar that funds a low-priority bike path is a dollar that isn't available for an urgent repair that might save the life of someone's son or daughter, or husband or wife.

Bicycle trails are, however, just one example of the earmarked projects that are funded through the Department of Transportation and the Highway Trust fund that are being spent on something other than roads and bridges.

Secretary of Transportation Mary Peters recently stated that "Americans would be shocked to learn that only about 60 percent of the gas tax money that they pay today actually goes into highway and bridge construction. Much of it goes in many, many other areas." Secretary Peters said about 10 to 20 percent of the current federal transportation spending is paying for projects that are not "directly transportation-related," specifically citing "bike paths or trails."<sup>32</sup>

A study conducted by the Owner Operator Independent Drivers Association found that 35 percent of all federal fuel tax revenue pays for non-road projects like bike paths, museums and other earmarked projects such as lighthouse maintenance.<sup>33</sup>

With deficient bridges in every state, Congress needs to ensure that transportation dollars are not being diverted away from much needed road work and bridge upkeep to pay for pet projects, such a bike paths, that are not essential and far less used than interstates and bridges.

Such common sense priority setting would ensure safer roads and would not require asking Americans to pay higher taxes.

Not surprisingly, those politicians who have made it a habit of diverting millions of dollars to their own pet projects are the ones calling for tax increase to finance infrastructure upgrades.

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<sup>32</sup> "Transportation Secretary Discusses Concerns About National Infrastructure," PBS NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, August 15, 2007; [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/transportation/july-dec07/infrastructure\\_08-15.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/transportation/july-dec07/infrastructure_08-15.html)

<sup>33</sup> "Truckers say feds are bribing New York, other cities with toll grants," Land Line Magazine, August 16, 2007; [http://www.landlinemag.com/todays\\_news/Daily/2007/Aug07/081307/081607-03.htm](http://www.landlinemag.com/todays_news/Daily/2007/Aug07/081307/081607-03.htm)

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Minnesota Congressman Jim Oberstar, has called for a five cent per gallon tax increase to fund bridge repair.<sup>34</sup>

Until policymakers prove themselves more responsible with the tax money already available to them, tax increases will not improve driver safety or deficient roads and bridges.

The thousands of dubious pork-barrel projects, including millions of dollars of bike paths, funded with federal transportation dollars clearly demonstrate that money is not the problem, priority-setting is.

### **Making Bridges and Roads the Focus of Transportation Funding Returns the Intended Purpose of the Highway Trust Fund**

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 established the Highway Trust Fund to ensure that revenues from a gas tax and other transportation taxes would be used only to fund the construction of the Interstate Highway System, which was considered a federal responsibility for national defense reasons. The system was supposed to be completed by 1969, at which time the gas tax would sunset. Of course, as with so many taxes, the gas tax not only *didn't* sunset, it increased.

In 1983 it was hiked from 4 cents a gallon to 9 cents, with 1 cent diverted to the newly-created Mass Transit Trust Fund for projects, mostly in a handful of big cities, that have nothing to do with highways.

Since then, the misuse of Highway Trust Fund dollars has only worsened. In particular, since the passage of the 1991 highway bill, funds raised from motorists at the pump have been diverted to bicycle paths, scenic landscape designs, pedestrian walkways, parking garages, and any number of non-highway projects.

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<sup>34</sup> "Oberstar promotes tax increase plan," Twin Cities Daily Planet, August 24, 2007; <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/node/6344>

In 1993, President Bill Clinton signed legislation increasing the gas tax by 4.3 cents, bringing the total tax to 18.4 cents per gallon. While the tax has remained the same since, the amount of transportation funds diverted away from highways and bridges has increased dramatically.

The 2005 highway bill diverted more than \$20 billion in federal gas-tax dollars to 6,373 pork-barrel earmarks, including the infamous "Bridge to Nowhere," pedestrian and bike trails, and new park signs.<sup>35</sup>

The Minnesota *Star Tribune* recently noted that:

"[Minnesota Congressman Jim] Oberstar played a lead role in crafting the 2005 bill as ranking Democrat on the House Transportation Committee. In the bill, Congress allocated about \$4 billion a year for bridge reconstruction and maintenance. It designated about the same amount-- about \$24 billion over a five-year period-- for member earmarks in a bipartisan porkfest.

"Ironically, \$24 billion is almost exactly the amount that Oberstar now says we must raise through new taxes to prevent future bridge collapses.

"Oberstar's earmarks were among the highest for any member, totaling \$250 million. What did they fund?

"Not repair of the I-35W bridge, though the state had identified cracks in the bridge as a major concern in 1999. Oberstar's earmarks, which included many road-related projects, also provided \$25 million for Twin Cities bicycle and pedestrian trails and lanes, and such 'high

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<sup>35</sup> Phil Kerpen. "Gas-Tax Hikes Only Fuel the Problem," National Review, August 28, 2007; <http://article.nationalreview.com/?q=N2FhYTU2YjVlYzk1NTgyMjNmOTgwMDdiYzI5ODI5N2Q=>

priority' items as \$471,000 for the Edge of Wilderness Discovery Center in Marcell. ...

"He did slip in \$1.5 million for a new bridge in Baxter -- for the Paul Bunyan bike trail.

"Oberstar, an avid cyclist, has lavished federal gas-tax dollars on bike trails for years. In 1991, he spearheaded legislation that first allowed Highway Trust Fund monies to flow to state bike trails.

"Now Oberstar has taken his enthusiasm for bikes a step further. He recently amended a federal aviation law to allow airports to spend federal funds on bike storage facilities."<sup>36</sup>

**By passing this amendment to prevent transportation dollars from being spent on bicycle trails, Congress will provide millions of dollars for bridge upgrades without raising taxes and begin reestablishing the original intent of the highway trust fund.**

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<sup>36</sup> Katherine Kersten. "Until I-35W disaster, Oberstar's funding focus wasn't on bridges," Star Tribune, August 22, 2007; <http://www.startribune.com/191/story/1378267.html>



Agency: Department of Transportation  
 Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
 Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
 Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
 Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Reconstruct SH 33, including the planned bicycle/pedestrian component, between Port Washington and Saukville, Ozaukee County Year Enacted: 2005  
 Code: WI127

**1** recipient will receive **\$1,000,000**.

*Description:* Reconstruct SH 33, including the planned bicycle/pedestrian component, between Port Washington and Saukville, Ozaukee County

Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Wisconsin Department of Transportation	\$1,000	State Government	Madison, WI

Citation   
*Source:* Authorization Statute  
*Reference:* Public Law 109-59  
*Location:* Section 1702, Item 5146  
*Method:* SAFETEA1-2  
*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
 Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
 Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
 Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
 Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Construct a bicycle/ pedestrian path, and two bridges across Starkweather Creek, Madison. Year Enacted: 2005  
 Code: WI106

**1** recipient will receive **\$1,600,000**.

*Description:* Construct a bicycle/ pedestrian path, and two bridges across Starkweather Creek, Madison.

Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
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Wisconsin Department of Transportation                      \$1,600                      State Government                      Madison, WI

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute  
*Reference:* Public Law 109-59  
*Location:* Section 1702, Item 2822  
*Method:* SAFETEA1-2  
*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Construct a bicycle/ pedestrian path from Waunakee to Westport                      Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: WI103

**1** recipient will receive **\$1,600,000**.

*Description:* Construct a bicycle/ pedestrian path from Waunakee to Westport

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Wisconsin Department of Transportation	\$1,600	State Government	Madison, WI

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute  
*Reference:* Public Law 109-59  
*Location:* Section 1702, Item 2681  
*Method:* SAFETEA1-2  
*Citation Excerpt:*

Agency: Department of Transportation  
Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Construct a bicycle/ pedestrian path, Wisconsin Dells.                      Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: WI089

**1** recipient will receive **\$1,600,000**.

*Description:* Construct a bicycle/ pedestrian path, Wisconsin Dells.

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Wisconsin Department of Transportation	\$1,600	State Government	Madison, WI

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute  
*Reference:* Public Law 109-59  
*Location:* Section 1702, Item 1593  
*Method:* SAFETEA1-2  
*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
 Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
 Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
 Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
 Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Construct bicycle/ pedestrian path and facilities in the Central park area of Madison Year Enacted: 2005  
 Code: WI087

**1** recipient will receive **\$2,800,000**.

*Description:* Construct bicycle/ pedestrian path and facilities in the Central park area of Madison

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Wisconsin Department of Transportation	\$2,800	State Government	Madison, WI

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute  
*Reference:* Public Law 109-59  
*Location:* Section 1702, Item 1521  
*Method:* SAFETEA1-2  
*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
 Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
 Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
 Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
 Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Construct a bicycle/pedestrian path, City of Portage Year Enacted: 2005  
 Code: WI071

**1** recipient will receive **\$1,760,000**.

*Description:* Construct a bicycle/pedestrian path, City of Portage

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Wisconsin Department of Transportation	\$1,760	State Government	Madison, WI

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute

*Reference:* Public Law 109-59

*Location:* Section 1702, Item 620

*Method:* SAFETEA1-2

*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Improve Willapa Hills bicycle and pedestrian trail between Chehalis and Pacific County Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: WA194

**1** recipient will receive **\$700,000**.

*Description:* Improve Willapa Hills bicycle and pedestrian trail between Chehalis and Pacific County

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Washington Department of Transportation	\$700	State Government	Olympia, WA

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute

*Reference:* Public Law 109-59

*Location:* Section 1702, Item 2095

*Method:* SAFETEA1-2

*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Ceres Recreation Trail and Center--Design and construct pedestrian/ bicycle trail in community of Ceres and establish trail center Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: VA155

**1** recipient will receive **\$120,000**.

*Description:* Ceres Recreation Trail and Center--Design and construct pedestrian/ bicycle trail in community of Ceres and establish trail center

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Virginia Department of Transportation	\$120	State Government	Richmond, VA

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute

*Reference:* Public Law 109-59

*Location:* Section 1702, Item 1887

*Method:* SAFETEA1-2

*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Reconstruct 500 West, including pedestrian and bicycle access, in Moab. Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: UT063

**1** recipient will receive **\$250,000**.

*Description:* Reconstruct 500 West, including pedestrian and bicycle access, in Moab.

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Utah Department of Transportation	\$250	State Government	Salt Lake City, UT

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute

*Reference:* Public Law 109-59

*Location:* Section 1702, Item 3604

*Method:* SAFETEA1-2

*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation

Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Design and Construct the Cottonwood Trail pedestrian-bicycle connection

Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: TX287

**1** recipient will receive **\$800,000**.

*Description:* Design and Construct the Cottonwood Trail pedestrian-bicycle connection

---

Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Texas Department of Transportation	\$800	State Government	Austin, TX

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute

*Reference:* Public Law 109-59

*Location:* Section 1702, Item 1751

*Method:* SAFETEA1-2

*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

Agency: Department of Transportation  
Bureau: Federal Highway Administration  
Account: Federal-aid Highways (69-8083)  
Certifying Official: Chief Financial Officer  
Contact Information: <http://WWW.DOT.GOV> 202-366-4570

Develop and construct transportation enhancements including bicycle/pedestrian trails, landscaping, footbridges, parks, and river access on and in the vicinity of the Milltown Dam Site, Missoula County and Deer Lodge County

Year Enacted: 2005  
Code: MT047

**1** recipient will receive **\$5,000,000**.

*Description:* Develop and construct transportation enhancements including bicycle/pedestrian trails, landscaping, footbridges, parks, and river access on and in the vicinity of the Milltown Dam Site, Missoula County and Deer Lodge County

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Beneficiary/Recipient	Amount (\$K)	Program Type	Address
Montana Department of Transportation	\$5,000	State Government	Helena, MT

Citation 

*Source:* Authorization Statute

*Reference:* Public Law 109-59

*Location:* Section 1934, Item 242

*Method:* SAFETEA1-2

*Citation Excerpt:*

Last Modified: 24-Jul-2007

**Katherine Kersten: Until I-35W disaster, Oberstar's funding focus wasn't on bridges**

**By Katherine Kersten, Star Tribune**

In the wake of the Interstate 35W bridge collapse, DFL leaders want to raise the state gas tax to fund transportation needs.

At the same time, Minnesota Rep. Jim Oberstar -- the powerful chairman of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee -- has called for a "temporary" 5-cent increase in the federal gas tax to raise what he says is a critically needed \$25 billion over three years for a national bridge-repair trust fund.

"If you're not prepared to invest another five cents in bridge reconstruction and road reconstruction, then God help you," he said after the bridge collapse.

Polls suggest that ordinary folks aren't convinced of a divine mandate for higher taxes. Most likely, they're skeptical about how our pols are stewarding current transportation funds.

Oberstar is Exhibit A. He's long been well-positioned to help steer funds toward bridge safety, and has known of the seriousness of the problem since he held hearings on bridge conditions 20 years ago, he says. But he's had other priorities.

For example, on July 25 -- a week before the bridge collapse -- Oberstar issued a press release announcing his latest coup for Minnesota.

He had obtained more than \$12 million for his home state in a recently passed House transportation and housing bill. Commuter rail was the big winner, getting \$10 million. The Cambridge-Isanti Bike/Walk Trail got \$250,000, and the KidsPeace Mesabi Academy in Buhl got \$150,000. Only \$2 million went for meat-and-potatoes road improvements.

Not a penny was slated for bridge repair.

Transportation funding is the epitome of pork-barrel politics. It's notorious for earmarks -- items that politicians insert into bills to finance pet projects in their districts.

Critics call it a spoils system that distributes money based on political clout rather than transportation need.

The 2005 federal transportation bill illustrates the extent of the problem. The \$286 billion bill included a record 6,373 earmarks, up from a handful in 1982.

Oberstar played a lead role in crafting the 2005 bill as ranking Democrat on the House Transportation Committee. In the bill, Congress allocated about \$4 billion a year for bridge

reconstruction and maintenance. It designated about the same amount -- about \$24 billion over a five-year period -- for member earmarks in a bipartisan porkfest.

Ironically, \$24 billion is almost exactly the amount that Oberstar now says we must raise through new taxes to prevent future bridge collapses.

Oberstar's earmarks were among the highest for any member, totaling \$250 million. What did they fund?

Not repair of the I-35W bridge, though the state had identified cracks in the bridge as a major concern in 1999. Oberstar's earmarks, which included many road-related projects, also provided \$25 million for Twin Cities bicycle and pedestrian trails and lanes, and such "high priority" items as \$471,000 for the Edge of Wilderness Discovery Center in Marcell.

### **A bridge - but not for vehicles**

Oh, and he did slip in \$1.5 million for a new bridge in Baxter -- for the Paul Bunyan bike trail.

Oberstar, an avid cyclist, has lavished federal gas-tax dollars on bike trails for years. In 1991, he spearheaded legislation that first allowed Highway Trust Fund monies to flow to state bike trails.

Now Oberstar has taken his enthusiasm for bikes a step further. He recently amended a federal aviation law to allow airports to spend federal funds on bike storage facilities. (Now there's a pressing need we don't want to underfund.)

Could Oberstar be changing his earmark-happy ways? The bridge repair trust fund that he proposed after the I-35W collapse will prohibit earmarks. "I'm challenging everyone to break with the paradigm of the past -- to meet a higher standard," he said.

Does that mean that earmarks have been bad policy all along? Not at all, says Oberstar. "Citizens have a right to petition for redress of grievances. What are we, chopped liver in greater Minnesota? When the state bureaucracy won't fund projects that people need, they come to me for help."

Do we need new taxes to keep our bridges and roads safe? Minnesota reaped a bountiful \$3.5 billion from the 2005 federal transportation bill, up almost \$1 billion from its allocation under the previous highway bill. The Star Tribune called it a "cornucopia of big-bucks transportation" benefits.

At the state level, Minnesota spends almost twice as much today as it did just 10 years ago.

More taxes? How about doing a better job with what we've got?

Katherine Kersten • [kkersten@startribune.com](mailto:kkersten@startribune.com) Join the conversation at my blog, Think Again, which can be found at [www.startribune.com/thinkagain](http://www.startribune.com/thinkagain).

The Virginian-Pilot

June 14, 2007

<http://content.hamptonroads.com/story.cfm?story=126674&ran=8817>

## Chesapeake to move forward on \$16 million bike path

By **JOHN HOPKINS**, The Virginian-Pilot

© June 15, 2007 | Last updated 11:39 PM Jun. 15

CHESAPEAKE

The city will move forward with a plan to build a two-mile bicycle path along Dominion Boulevard at an estimated cost of \$16 million.

The path would stretch from Cedar Road, over the Southern Branch of the Elizabeth River to Bainbridge Boulevard. It would be part of a bigger Dominion Boulevard improvement project, which includes the replacement of the Steel Bridge.

City Council members recently voted 7 -1 in favor of the bike path. Councilman Bryan Collins was absent the day of the vote.

Mayor Dalton Edge cast the lone vote against the idea, arguing the money should be used elsewhere.

"It's a \$16 million project," Edge said Thursday. "It reminds me of the bridge to nowhere in Alaska.... You talk about government spending, and to spend that kind of money on a bike path that would be rarely utilized is stunning to me."

Bridge tenders report as many as five bikers a day use the shoulder of Dominion Boulevard to cross the Steel Bridge. There are no obvious signs of bike or pedestrian activity on or near the bridge, according to a report Public Works officials made to council last month.

Citizen feedback for the project has been positive, according to Tammy Barry, Public Works spokeswoman. About 56 residents attended a public input meeting on the project and a total of 73 people submitted comments, Barry said.

"The result was 2 -to-1 in favor of the bike path," Barry said.

Financing for the project could come from federally earmarked dollars, with Virginia Department of Transportation matching funds, Barry said. The cost estimates are in fiscal 2009 dollars.

The Dominion Boulevard improvements project calls for widening of the road, replacement of the Steel Bridge, a toll facility and interchange improvements. A multi use trail would be separated from the new four-lane road by a small barrier.

State policy encourages projects such as the trail.

"It's a requirement that when we are looking at a design project like Dominion Boulevard that we consider alternate transportation, including bike lanes," said Harry Kenyon, a VDOT spokesman.

A public hearing on the location design of the multi use path will take place in the fall. In voting for the path, City Council had three options - keep the bicycle facility as planned, ask the

Commonwealth Transportation Board to allow bicycle riders to use the shoulders of the improved road, or cut the bicycle facility from the city's plan.

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The News & Observer  
October 29, 2006  
<http://www.newsobserver.com/114/story/504213.html>

## Road planning short-circuited in Congress

N.C. delegation's add-ons to highway bills often delay or kill projects in state's long-range plan

PAT STITH, Staff Writer

North Carolina's members of Congress quietly took control of more than \$135 million from the state Department of Transportation last year to help pay for dozens of highway projects they favored. That means other projects deemed more important by state and local officials must be delayed.

The new projects dictated by Congress didn't have enough support in North Carolina to be included among the 2,337 funded in the state's 2006-2012 Transportation Improvement Program. But some local officials and others hired Washington lobbyists to plead their case for highway money.

The congressional highway spending mandates in the transportation reauthorization bill, called earmarks, usually provide no additional money. They require that existing funds be spent on specific projects.

New projects earmarked by members of the delegation include pedestrian and bike paths in Cary, Durham and Durham County, and roads for a park in Asheville and a university athletic facility in Charlotte. A road-widening project Concord wanted went from not-on-the-horizon to build-it-in-2009 -- lightning speed for major highway work.

Drivers pay 48.3 cents in tax on each gallon of gasoline they buy in North Carolina -- that's 18.4 cents in federal taxes and 29.9 cents in state taxes. Within broad guidelines set by Congress, the states have traditionally decided how to spend their share of federal gasoline tax receipts. But that is changing.

The growth of earmarks in the transportation reauthorization bill, which Congress considers about every six years, has been remarkable. It raises questions about who knows best how to spend federal highway money: members of Congress, or state and local officials and the highway planners who assist them.

In 1987, the transportation reauthorization bill included 152 earmarks, and President Reagan vetoed it, in part because he considered that too many. In last year's bill, there were 6,371, according to Taxpayers for Common Sense, a nonpartisan budget watchdog.

In North Carolina, highway earmarks in the reauthorization bill now represent 6 percent to 7 percent of the \$4.4 billion in federal money the state expects to get from 2005 to 2009.

Calvin W. Leggett, manager of the state Department of Transportation's Program Development Branch, said there has been some grumbling among local planning groups but, so far, they have all deferred to the congressional delegation and approved the new projects.

"People in Washington make laws," he said. "They make laws about lots of things. Transportation is just a small piece of what they do. What kind of debate's gonna ensue if you ... defy 'em?"

## **Rob Peter, pay Paul**

To build projects earmarked by Congress, the state must almost always take money from other plans.

For its Derita Road widening project, Concord got four earmarks totaling \$9.95 million. All that money would have come to North Carolina anyway -- but for other projects. Something had to go. In this case, the widening of Poplar Tent Road in Concord will be delayed at least four years.

Most of the time, there is no way to know which projects are being delayed because of earmarks. Those projects are commingled with other work delayed because of inflation or because of other, more pressing, needs. The draft of the 2007-2013 state Transportation Improvement Program, released in August, identified more than 125 projects the state plans to delay "to assist in balancing funds."

Congressional legislation does not say who earmarked a project, although most North Carolina lawmakers claimed credit for certain projects in news releases. And the legislative language is so vague that it is often difficult to know who is benefiting. An earmark intended for Queens University in Charlotte, for example, does not mention the university.

In one instance, state highway officials couldn't even figure out what they were supposed to do.

The 2004 highway appropriations bill set aside \$200,000 for a study of U.S. 276, which runs through several mountain counties into South Carolina.

"We don't have anything we want to study on U.S. 276, and nobody has come forward and said, 'Why aren't you all studying 276?' " said R. Van Argabright, state Transportation Improvement Program squad leader.

## **Bypassing state DOT**

The increase in earmarks is driven in part by senators and representatives who want credit for highway work and in part by local government officials who want help.

There is not enough money to build all the road projects local officials say they need. That shortage is caused primarily by escalating construction costs, up 44 percent over the past three years, Leggett said.

Rep. G.K. Butterfield, a Wilson Democrat, said he is trying to get whatever he can for his district, which includes traditionally poor areas of northeastern North Carolina.

"For those of us who represent rural communities, it's the way for us to get resources that we otherwise would not get," Butterfield said. "I am going to avail myself of every earmark opportunity that exists and not apologize for it."

Local officials and others, such as universities, are hiring Washington lobbyists, paying fees that can exceed \$100,000 a year and taking their case to Congress. They bypass the elaborate transportation planning process mandated by the federal government and end up killing or delaying other projects in their area.

"When you have an earmark, you've got someone basically short-circuiting that process," said Mark L. Foster, the state transportation department's chief financial officer. Every earmark that doesn't bring in new money fuels the competition for more earmarks.

State Transportation Secretary Lyndo Tippet calls earmarks a "flawed" process. There is little he or anyone else outside of Congress can do about it, but the Board of Transportation is trying.

In an effort to restrain earmarks for projects that are not funded in the Transportation Improvement Program, the board adopted a policy last fall that puts local governments and others on notice: If you go to Washington and get an earmark for a project that isn't in the program, or is in the program but hasn't been funded, you're pretty much on your own. You plan it, you engineer it, you build it and you put up the 20 percent match and any other money needed to complete the project.

### **DOT self-defense**

The North Carolina delegation put 115 highway earmarks in the 2005 reauthorization bill. Fifty-four were for projects that were already in the works. Many were requested by the state Department of Transportation -- in self-defense.

For several years, the department has assigned one of its employees to work in Washington, lobbying members of the North Carolina delegation. Part of Caitlin H. Rayman's job, Leggett said, is to ask members of the delegation to earmark projects that the state already intends to build.

"If all they're doing is taking money that North Carolina would get anyway, we would much prefer to set priorities inside North Carolina than to have them set in Washington, period," Leggett said.

Earmarking a project that is already in the state's plans allows the delegation member to claim credit for the transportation work.

### **Local frustration**

Pat Mumford, a Charlotte City Council member who heads the transportation planning committee for Mecklenburg and Union Counties, says the earmarking process is frustrating because it undermines plans made by local and state officials.

Committees such as the one he heads -- there are 17 across the state -- study their area's transportation needs, conduct public hearings and come up with a plan. Those plans are reviewed by the state Board of Transportation and incorporated in the statewide Transportation Improvement Program.

"If we keep doing this, people are going to go straight to Washington to avoid the process," he said. "And that's what we don't want to have happen."

Members of the state's congressional delegation mean well, he said, but they don't understand that they're just "shuffling the deck," moving money from one project to another. Next month, he said, the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization will consider canceling or postponing almost \$20 million worth of projects to pay for earmarks that did not bring new money to the area.

Ed Johnson, director of the metropolitan planning organization that includes Wake and parts of four nearby counties, said the normal funding process is so far behind that communities have started using political action.

"In my mind, it's a sign of desperation and a lack of confidence in the system addressing needs like it ought to," Johnson said.

## **Defending earmarks**

Rep. David Price, a Chapel Hill Democrat who represents all of Durham and Orange counties and parts of Wake and Chatham, said that Democrats, because they are in the minority, have little say about earmarks.

In the 2005 transportation reauthorization bill, he said, he was allowed to earmark \$14.5 million.

"I'm not on the Transportation Committee. ... It would not surprise me if members of the committee, especially the senior members, got more," he said.

Price assigned most of his earmark money to projects in the Transportation Improvement Program: \$8.8 million for Raleigh's Outer Loop, \$1.6 million for the American Tobacco Trail in Durham and Chatham counties and, in a different part of the bill, \$1.3 million for a park-and-ride lot in Chapel Hill.

But he also earmarked \$2.8 million for bicycle and pedestrian trails in Cary, Durham and Durham County. Since those projects were not in the state plan and did not bring in additional money, other projects in the same highway division will have to be delayed to pay for them.

Price said there have been abuses of earmarks. But overall, he defends them, saying Congress should not be an "echo chamber" for the state Department of Transportation.

He said the total of all the earmarks is a "tiny percentage" of the state's federal highway allocation.

"Should a member of Congress have any say in this?" Price asked. "I think the answer is yes."

(News researcher Brooke Cain contributed to this report.)

Staff writer Pat Stith can be reached at 829-4537 or [pstith@newsobserver.com](mailto:pstith@newsobserver.com).  
News researcher Brooke Cain contributed to this report.

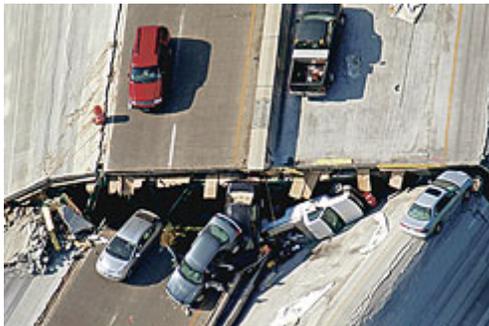
## HOT TOPIC

# Aging Infrastructure: How Bad Is It?

By NICK TIMIRAOS

A dramatic rush-hour collapse of the eight-lane Interstate 35W bridge in Minneapolis into the Mississippi River left at least five confirmed dead and more missing.

The disaster raised anew questions about the safety of the country's aging infrastructure.



A collapsed section of the I-35W bridge in Minneapolis.

Last month, a steam-pipe explosion in Manhattan killed one person, while in April an Oakland highway overpass collapsed after a tanker truck carrying gasoline crashed into a highway support, melting the steel roadway support. Those accidents follow the 2005 failure of levees during Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

Blue-ribbon commissions have been sounding warnings for years as the country's growing population burdens the nation's aging transportation and utility infrastructure. Hours before Wednesday's

bridge collapse, Sen. Christopher Dodd (D., Conn.) and Sen. Chuck Hagel (R., Neb.) introduced legislation calling for a new trust to fund infrastructure upgrades.

Here's a closer look:

**How serious is the problem of aging infrastructure?** The I-35W bridge in Minneapolis, a major artery used by 141,000 daily, was first deemed "structurally deficient" by state engineers in 1990, a designation that requires repairs but doesn't mean the bridge is unsafe. Nearly one-quarter of the 600,000 bridges in the U.S. are listed as structurally deficient or obsolete, down from one-third in 1992, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. Obsolete bridges don't meet certain traffic standards due to older design features, but aren't necessarily unsafe for all vehicles.

## POINTS OF VIEW

*"I think we should look at this tragedy that occurred as a wake-up call for us. We have -- all over the country -- crumbling infrastructure, highways, bridges, dams."*

---- Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D., Nev.)

*"Transportation delay and unreliability have begun to chip away at one of our nation's most important economic assets: an efficient transportation system that allows businesses freedom of location and the ability to quickly reach customers."*

---- Jeffrey N. Shane, Undersecretary for Policy, U.S. Department of Transportation

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## COMMENTARY

### • [Review & Outlook: Bridges to Somewhere](#)

While bridge failures remain rare, one-third of some 40,000 highway fatalities every year result from substandard road conditions, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers. The group also warns that one-third of major roads are in poor or mediocre condition. Congestion delays in the 85 largest metropolitan areas cost the average traveler 47 hours in 2003, up from 16 hours in 1982, according to the Texas Transportation Institute.

As the nation's infrastructure ages -- last year marked the 50th anniversary of the Interstate Highway System -- growing congestion on the roads, rails and in the skies has spurred calls for a new national transportation plan.

**How much could an upgrade cost?** The American Society of Civil Engineers puts the total price tag for improvements to the nation's roads, bridges, dams, water systems and airports at \$1.6 trillion. Repairing deficient bridges alone would cost \$188 billion over 20 years.

But finding money for transportation projects has grown more difficult, in part because the federal gas tax, which pays for improvements, hasn't risen since 1993. Also, highway construction costs have risen 50% since 1999. The federal Highway Trust Fund is projected to run a deficit of nearly \$4 billion in 2009.

Others have faulted the current federal funding process, which they say encourages earmarks that benefit local development, often at the expense of regional and national priorities. Congress passed a \$286 billion transportation bill two years ago that contained more than 6,000 pet projects inserted by members of Congress from both parties.

**How does aging infrastructure hurt the economy?** Highways remain the most important shipping lanes in the country. In 2005, highways carried three-quarters of all freight by weight and 92% by value. While the Interstate Highway System comprises just 1% of public road miles, it carries 41% of the country's large-truck freight traffic. Growing congestion threatens to drive up logistics costs for businesses. Poor road conditions cost motorists some \$54 billion in repairs every year, about \$275 per motorist.

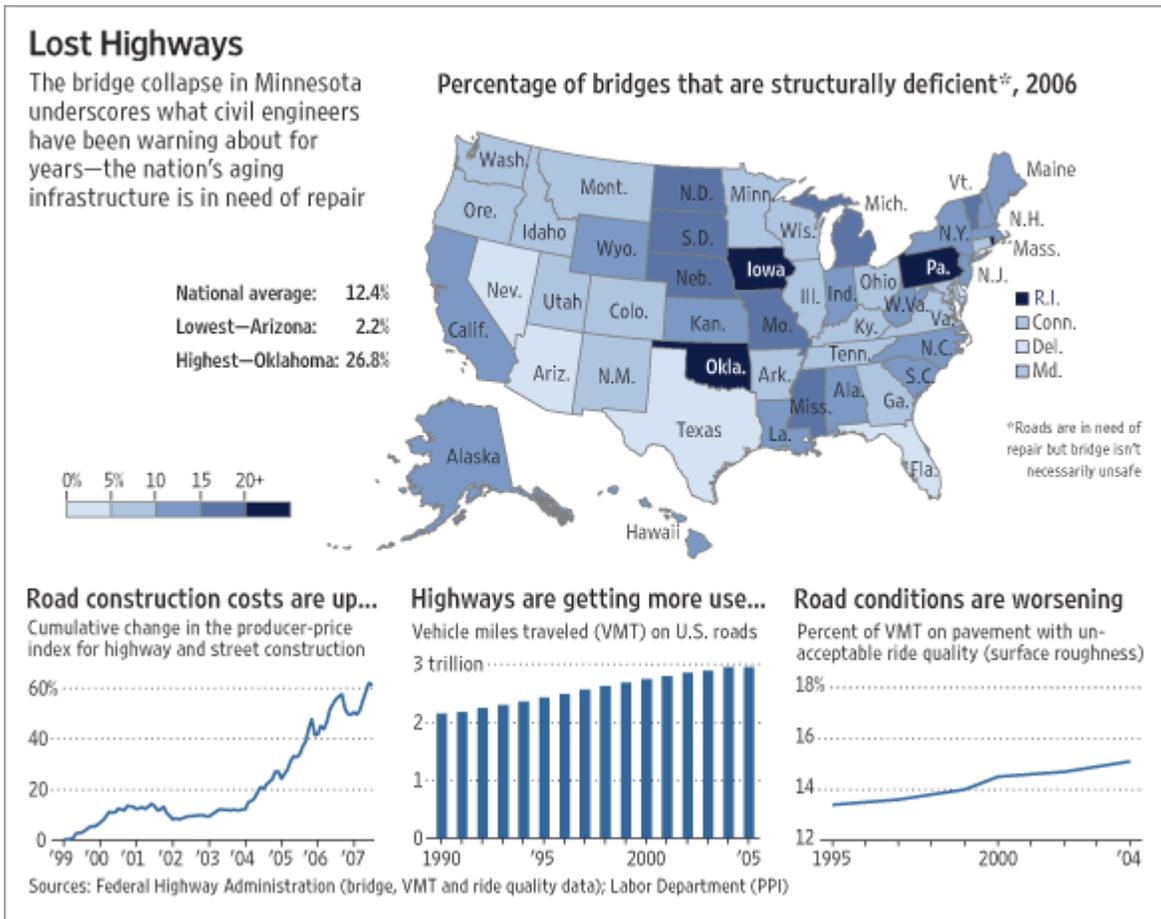
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## Facts

- The number of dams deemed unsafe has risen by 33% to more than 3,500 since 1998.

- About 1,500 bridges collapsed between 1966 and 2005, and about 60% of those failures resulted from the erosion of land around the bridge support, according to Jean-Louis Briaud, a research engineer at the Texas Transportation Institute.
- The I-35W bridge stood 64 feet above the Mississippi River and stretched 1,900 feet, but it had no piers in the water. It was built with one 458-foot-long steel arch to avoid interfering with river navigation. There are about 700 similar steel-deck truss bridges in the country.
- The worst highway bottleneck in the country is the Los Angeles interchange of U.S. Highway 101 and Interstate 405, according to the American Highway Users Alliance.
- Americans spent an average of 81 minutes behind the wheel everyday in 2001. Rush-hour motorists in the nation's largest cities spend up to eight work days stuck in traffic each year.

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**New York Times**

**August 7, 2007**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/us/07highway.html?\\_r=2&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/08/07/us/07highway.html?_r=2&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)

## **Bridge Collapse Revives Issue of Road Spending**

By [SUSAN SAULNY](#) and [JENNIFER STEINHAUER](#)

MINNEAPOLIS, Aug. 6 — In the past two years, Gov. Tim Pawlenty of [Minnesota](#) twice vetoed legislation to raise the state's gas tax to pay for transportation needs.

Now, with at least five people dead in the collapse of the Interstate 35W bridge here, Mr. Pawlenty, [a Republican](#), appears to have had a change of heart.

“He’s open to that,” Brian McClung, a spokesman for the governor, said Monday of a higher gas tax. “He believes we need to do everything we can to address this situation and the extraordinary costs.”

Even as the cause of the bridge disaster here remains under investigation, the collapse is changing a lot of minds about spending priorities. It has focused national attention on the crumbling condition of America's roadways and bridges — and on the financial and political neglect they have received in Washington and many state capitals.

Despite historic highs in transportation spending, the political muscle of lawmakers, rather than dire need, has typically driven where much of the money goes. That has often meant construction of new, politically popular roads and transit projects rather than the mundane work of maintaining the worn-out ones.

Further, transportation and engineering experts said, lawmakers have financed a boom in rail construction that, while politically popular, has resulted in expensive transit systems that are not used by a vast majority of American commuters.

Representative James L. Oberstar, Democrat of Minnesota and the chairman of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, sent out a news release last month boasting about Minnesota's share of a recent transportation and housing appropriations bill.

Of the \$12 million secured for the state, \$10 million is slated for a new 40-mile commuter rail line to Minneapolis, called the Northstar. The remaining \$2 million is divided among a new bike and walking path and a few other projects, including highway work and interchange reconstruction.

The \$286 billion federal transportation legislation passed by Congress in 2005 included more than 6,000 earmarks, which amounted to blatant gifts to chosen districts, including the so-called Bridge to Nowhere in rural Alaska (that earmark was later removed after a political uproar).

Senator [Charles E. Schumer](#), Democrat of New York, said in a telephone interview Monday that earmarks for transportation in federal legislation were “almost always new construction and not maintenance.” Earlier, Mr. Schumer said that he would introduce legislation next month to double a proposed federal transportation bill appropriation, with a focus on upkeep to \$10 billion.

“The bottom line,” Mr. Schumer said, “is that routine but important things like maintenance always get shortchanged because it’s nice for somebody to cut a ribbon for a new structure.”

Last week, Representative John L. Mica of Florida, the ranking Republican on the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, met with advisers to the Bush administration to urge a nationwide plan to address transportation needs. Rebuilding the I-35W bridge would be only “a Band-Aid” Mr. Mica said, “to a much more serious problem.”

“We don’t have any kind of strategic plan to deal with infrastructure, and we’re falling behind,” he said.

In statehouses across the country, legislators tried this past session to fill some of the void by passing bond acts or allocating money to improve roads, bridges and other pieces of the transportation system.

In Arkansas, lawmakers set aside \$80 million, 15 percent of which will be used to repair county roads, 15 percent for city byways and the rest for its highways. New Mexico approved a \$200 million plan for local and tribal road projects, and in Texas, \$700 million was allotted for state transportation projects over the next two years.

Voters in California this year authorized nearly \$20 billion in transportation bonds to pay for repairs and make other improvements to its taxed system.

“We still barely scratched the surface,” said Adam Mendelsohn, the communications director for Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#), a Republican. “The governor is very concerned about the lack of attention that the federal government has given to infrastructure. It is probably no more acute than in California because of the tremendous strains from population growth.”

The federal budget for transportation comes largely from excise taxes, particularly on gasoline, set by Congress at 18.4 cents in 1993 and eroded over time by inflation and fuel efficiency. As such, over the last decade, state

legislatures in 14 states have voted to raise the state gas tax 19 times. And several states are looking at toll roads and congestion pricing initiatives to help shore up the roads.

The National Conference of State Legislatures, a group with members from all 50 states, is calling for a 3-cents per gallon increase in the federal gas tax.

C. Michael Walton, a professor of civil engineering at the [University of Texas](#), Austin, helped write a series of reports issued by the American Society of Civil Engineers that have repeatedly found the nation's highway system with insufficient money. "Continually falling short of the actual needs," Professor Walton said, results largely from "our backlash to increases in taxes."

Professor Walton said states had been looking to the federal government for leadership. "I am not sure transportation falls to the top of the priorities as it should barring a catastrophic failure," he said in reference to state government spending.

A study released in May by the Urban Land Institute and Ernst & Young found that 83 percent of the nation's transportation infrastructure was not capable of meeting the country's needs over the next 10 years. The American Society of Civil Engineers, in its latest national report card, gave transportation infrastructure a D.

Meanwhile, there are urgent needs. The Interstate highway system turned 50 last year and is showing signs of age and inadequate upkeep. Around St. Louis, for instance, old bridges, rocky roads and tight ramp loops have led to a shutdown of parts of Interstate 64/Highway 40 — one of the most important corridors in the state — until late 2009.

"It's so easy to let this stuff slip," said Robert Dunphy, a senior resident fellow at the Urban Land Institute.

The national highway system, originally called the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, came into being under the Eisenhower administration. (The country's population was 169 million then, and there were about 54 million registered vehicles on the roads.) It was spurred by fears that Americans would have a mobility crisis if the country were attacked in a nuclear war. By the 1970s much of the system was completed.

But since then, the nation's highways have eroded with age and use, especially in areas like the Southwest where population booms have far outweighed the ability of roads to carry the new drivers.

Typically financing for capital transportation projects comes from the federal government matched with funds from states, which are then charged with maintaining the roads and bridges. But the federal government and states

operate trust funds, filled with revenues from various excise taxes, which have been unable to maintain existing roadways adequately or finance capital expenditures.

But it may often be less the amount allocated for transportation than how it is doled out that leads to eroding highways, some critics say.

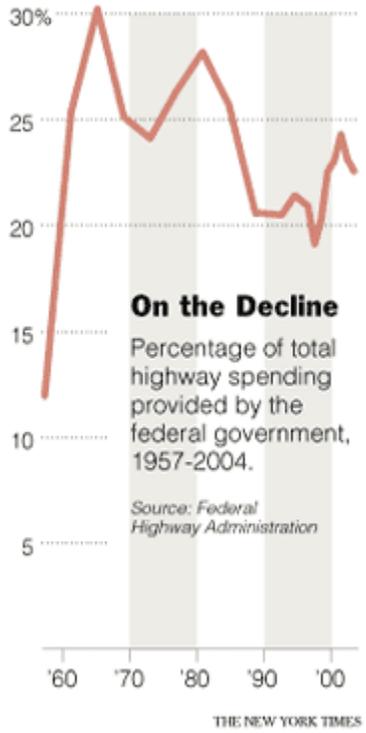
“Highway funding is supposed to be on the basis of need,” said Raymond Helmer, a transportation consultant in Houston who has worked on transportation projects for over 50 years. “There is supposed to be cost-benefit analysis, and every state does a study as required by federal government and comes up with needs, but then politicians say, ‘I don’t want that road here, I want it here.’ ”

Some transportation experts also said that though light rail and other public transportation projects made sense in cities, investing in them in sprawling suburban regions might not, even if the systems were supported, in theory, by the public.

“Too many American cities are spending far too much money on expensive rail transit projects, which are used for only 1 to 2 percent of local travel, and far too little on highway projects which are used for 95 to 99 percent of local travel,” Randal O’Toole, a senior fellow with the Cato Institute, said in an e-mail interview.

There has also been more emphasis nationwide on building new roads than on the maintenance and upkeep of old ones. Steve Ellis, the vice president of Taxpayers for Common Sense, a group that monitors federal spending, said that might help move traffic in some places, but it left many others with the equivalent of a leaky roof.

“It would be irresponsible of me to go out to dinner if I couldn’t fix a leak in my roof,” Mr. Ellis said. “But that’s essentially what we do. We don’t take care of what we’ve got, but we talk a lot about building more and new.”



*Susan Saulny reported from Minneapolis, and Jennifer Steinhauer from Los Angeles.*

Associated Press

August 3, 2007

<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20070803/D8QPDKKG0.html>

## More Than 70,000 Bridges Rated Deficient

Aug 3, 3:31 AM (ET)

By H. JOSEF HEBERT and SHARON THEIMER

WASHINGTON (AP) - More than 70,000 bridges across the country are rated structurally deficient like the span that collapsed in Minneapolis, and engineers estimate repairing them all would take at least a generation and cost more than \$188 billion.

That works out to at least \$9.4 billion a year over 20 years, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.

The bridges carry an average of more than 300 million vehicles a day.

It is unclear how many of the spans pose actual safety risks. Federal officials alerted the states late Thursday to immediately inspect all bridges similar to the Mississippi River span that collapsed.

In a separate cost estimate, the Federal Highway Administration has said addressing the backlog of needed bridge repairs would take at least \$55 billion. That was five years ago, with expectations of more deficiencies to come.

It is money that Congress, the federal government and the states have so far been unable or unwilling to spend.

"We're not doing what the engineers are saying we need to be doing," said Gregory Cohen, president of the American Highway Users Alliance, an advocacy group representing a wide range of motorists.

"Unfortunately when you consistently underinvest in roads and bridges ... this is the dangerous consequence," Cohen said of Wednesday's deadly Mississippi River bridge collapse in Minneapolis. He said engineers have estimated \$75 billion a year is needed just to keep highways and bridges from further deterioration, but that only around \$60 billion a year is being provided.

At least 73,533 of 607,363 bridges in the nation, or about 12 percent, were classified as "structurally deficient," including some built as recently as the early 1990s, according to 2006 statistics from the Federal Highway Administration.

The federal government provides 80 percent of the money for construction, repair and maintenance of the so-called federal-aid highway system

including Interstate highways and bridges. But states set priorities and handle construction and maintenance contracts.

A bridge is typically judged structurally deficient if heavy trucks are banned from it or there are other weight restrictions, if it needs immediate work to stay open or if it is closed. In any case, such a bridge is considered in need of considerable maintenance, rehabilitation or even replacement.

Congressional leaders say the number of bridges in need of repair is too high and the funding too low.

There is crumbling infrastructure all over the country, said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev. Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., who heads the Senate panel that controls transportation spending, said the Bush administration has threatened vetoes when Democrats try to increase such spending.

White House deputy press secretary Scott Stanzel, accusing the Democrats of using the bridge collapse for partisan purposes, said Bush had increased funding for federal highways by about 30 percent during his administration. The president had threatened to veto legislation not over highway funding but because of billions of dollars in excess funding in other areas, Stanzel said.

Democrats were not alone in calling for more bridge funding.

"People think they're saving money by not investing in infrastructure, and the result is you have catastrophes like this," said Rep. Tom Petri, R-Wis., a member of the House transportation committee.

**The federal government is now providing about \$40 billion a year to improve and expand the nation's highways and bridges.**

The main source of revenue for roads and bridges, the federal highway trust fund, is failing to keep up with spending demand. The 18.3 cents a gallon in federal taxes hasn't changed since 1993, and the demand for more fuel-efficient vehicles could affect fuel consumption.

Funding isn't the only issue getting attention after the Minnesota collapse.

Transportation Secretary Mary Peters said in an interview with The Associated Press that she had asked her department's inspector general to evaluate the agency's overall bridge inspections.

According to the Federal Highway Administration, most bridges in the U.S. Highway Bridge Inventory - 83 percent - are inspected every two years. About 12 percent, those in bad shape, are inspected annually, and 5 percent, those in very good shape, every four years.

**The Department of Transportation's inspector general last year criticized the Highway Administration's oversight of interstate bridges.** The March 2006

report said investigators found incorrect or outdated maximum weight calculations and weight limit postings in the National Bridge Inventory and in states' bridge databases and said the problems could pose safety hazards. The Highway Administration agreed that improvements in its oversight of state bridge inspections and data were needed.

Incorrect load ratings could endanger bridges by allowing heavier vehicles to cross than should, and could affect whether a bridge is properly identified as structurally deficient in the first place, the inspector general said.

The audit didn't identify any Minnesota bridges or mention the state beyond noting that 3 percent of its bridges were structurally deficient, placing it at the low end among states. It said those bridges were crossed by an average of 30,000 to 40,000 vehicles a day, putting it 13th among the states.

An analysis of 2006 Federal Highway Administration data found that Minnesota bridges were generally in better shape than those in other states. Only about 6 percent of the state's 20,000 bridges were listed as being structurally deficient. **In Oklahoma, nearly 27 percent of bridges were cited by the federal government as being structurally deficient, the highest percentage among the states.**

Among counties with more than 100 bridges, the problem appears to be most significant in the Midwest. In Nemaha County in southeastern Nebraska, about 58 percent of 194 bridges are structurally deficient. More than 55 percent of neighboring Pawnee County's 188 bridges are in the same shape. Of the 10 worst-off counties with significant numbers of bridges, seven are in Oklahoma or Nebraska.

On the other end of the scale, at least 10 counties with a significant number of bridges have none that are structurally deficient, according to the latest government statistics. A half-dozen of those are in Texas.

Several governors on Wednesday ordered state transportation officials to inspect particular bridges or review their inspection procedures.

Beyond Minnesota, North Dakota Gov. John Hoeven said his state doesn't have any bridges similar to the Minneapolis bridge but he had asked state officials to review inspection procedures. Presidential hopeful and New Mexico Gov. Bill Richardson ordered an inspection of several steel-truss bridges in the state. Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano directed state transportation officials to conduct a statewide review, starting with highly traveled bridges in urban areas.

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Associated Press writers Jim Abrams, Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Jennifer Kerr in Washington and Frank Bass in East Dover, Vt., contributed to this report.

Associated Press  
August 3, 2007

<http://apnews.myway.com/article/20070803/D8OPGEE80.html>

## First Alarm About Bridge Raised in 1990

Aug 3, 6:43 AM (ET)

By **MARTIGA LOHN**

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) - It was 1990 when the federal government first issued an ominous label for the state's busiest bridge: "structurally deficient." In the ensuing years, inspectors found cracks and corrosion on the Interstate-35W bridge. They stepped up inspections from once every two years to every year, and made what they thought were the necessary repairs. They were convinced that the bridge had no safety issues at all.

Their actions have come under intense scrutiny since the 40-year-old bridge plummeted into the Mississippi River on Wednesday, killing at least four and injuring another 79.

Police said the death count would surely grow because bodies had been spotted in the fast-moving currents. As many as 30 people were still reported missing.

"We have a number of vehicles that are underneath big pieces of concrete, and we do know we have some people in those vehicles," Police Chief Tim Dolan said Thursday. "We know we do have more casualties at the scene."



(AP) This is the scene of the collapsed 35W bridge over the Mississippi River Thursday, Aug. 2, 2007, in...  
[Full Image](#)



SOURCE: ESRI AP  
(AP) Map locates freeway bridge collapse in Minneapolis, Minn.; 1c x 2 inches; 46.5 mm x 50.8 mm  
[Full Image](#)

The eight-lane I-35W bridge, which carried 141,000 vehicles a day, was in the midst of mostly resurfacing repairs when it buckled during the Wednesday evening rush hour.

Dozens of cars plummeted more than 60 feet into the Mississippi River, some falling on top of one another. A school bus sat on the angled concrete.

Among the missing is Sadiya Sahal, 23, and her 2-year-old daughter, Hanah Mohamed. Sahal, who is five months pregnant, left home at 5:15 p.m. with the toddler in the back seat. She called her family at 5:30 p.m. saying she was stuck in traffic on the bridge, according to Omar Jamal, a spokesman for the family. That was her last phone call.

"Her husband is destroyed. He's in shock," Jamal said.

Officials identified the dead as Sherry Engebretsen, 60, of suburban Shoreview; Julia Blackhawk, 32, of Savage; Patrick Holmes, 36, of Moundsview; and Artemio Trinidad-Mena, 29, of Minneapolis.

Ronald Engebretsen said he and his family were trying to come to grips with his wife's death. "She's a great person. She's a person of great conviction, great integrity, great honesty and great faith in her God," he said.

National Transportation Safety Board chairman Mark Rosenker said his investigators got two big breaks Thursday with a surveillance video showing the collapse and a computer program that would analyze how the bridge failed. Those two things would speed their work and allow them to do a smaller reconstruction of part of the bridge span, rather than the whole thing.

Despite the powerful images of devastation from the collapse, some believed the design of the bridge reduced the death toll.

Joseph Schofer, professor of civil and environmental engineering at Northwestern University, said the bridge's underlying arch truss stopped heavy pieces of steel from falling onto vehicles when the cars plunged into the water.

Gov. Tim Pawlenty responded Thursday by ordering an immediate inspection of all bridges in the state with similar designs, but said the state was never warned that the I-35W bridge needed to be closed or immediately repaired.

"There was a view that the bridge was ultimately and eventually going to need to be replaced," he said. "But it appears from the information that we have available that a timeline for that was not immediate or imminent, but more in the future."

More than 70,000 bridges across the country are rated structurally deficient like the I-35W bridge, and engineers estimate repairing them all would take at least a generation and cost more than \$188 billion.

"I think anybody who looks at the national picture, the national statistics and says that we don't have a problem would be naive or misleading the situation," Pawlenty said. "We have a major problem."

Authorities cautioned not to read too much into the "structurally deficient" tag. The designation means some portions of the bridge needed to be scheduled for repair or replacement. It wasn't a candidate for replacement until 2020.

The collapsed bridge is one of 1,160 bridges in that category, which amounts to 8 percent of bridges in the state. Nationally, about 12 percent of bridges are labeled "structurally deficient."

During the 1990s, inspections found fatigue cracks and corrosion in the steel around the bridge's joints. Those problems were repaired. Starting in 1993, the bridge was inspected annually instead of every other year.

State bridge engineer Dan Dorgan said the bearings could not have been repaired without jacking up the entire deck of the bridge. Because the bearings were not sliding, inspectors concluded the corrosion was not a major issue.

After a study raised concern about cracks, the state was given two alternatives: Add steel plates to reinforce critical parts or conduct a thorough inspection of certain areas to see if there were additional cracks. They chose the inspection route, beginning that examination in May.

"We thought we had done all we could," Dorgan told reporters near the mangled remains of the span. "Obviously something went terribly wrong."

The collapsed bridge's last full inspection was completed June 15, 2006. The report shows previous inspectors' notations of fatigue cracks in the spans approaching the river, including one four feet long that was reinforced with bolted plates.

Although concern was raised about cracks, some experts theorized it's no coincidence the collapse happened when workers and heavy equipment were on the bridge. The construction work involved resurfacing and maintenance on guardrails and lights, among other repairs.

"I would be stunned if this didn't have something to do with the construction project," said David Schulz, director of the Infrastructure Technology Institute at Northwestern University. "I think it's a major factor."

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Associated Press writers Seth Borenstein, Brian Bakst, Ryan Foley and Jon Krawczynski contributed to this report.

Star Tribune (Minnesota)  
July 29, 2007 – 9:32 PM  
<http://www.startribune.com/587/story/1331587.html>

## Cycling's political tour de finance

Influential Democrat Jim Oberstar doesn't hesitate to merge his policymaking power and his personal transportation passion, an attribute drawing both praise and criticism.

By [Jake Sherman](#), Star Tribune

WASHINGTON

Jim Oberstar's days in Washington begin at 6:30 a.m. At least twice a week, when the 17-term DFL congressman from northeastern Minnesota can find time before Washington's thick summer heat settles in, he saddles up on a road bike and embarks on a 10-mile jaunt around the mansion-lined roads of Potomac, Md. The route begins with a 1-mile climb up a hill that, he says, "gets the heart pumping."

At 72, Oberstar's zest for cycling is as great as his enthusiasm for funding public infrastructure. Fact is, the two passions often merge.

Oberstar can rattle off details about northern Minnesota's cycling trails with uncanny ease, describing scenic overlooks from Baxter to Bemidji. He has his schedule timed perfectly so that when he lands in the Twin Cities on weekend trips home, a connecting flight will get him to Chisholm in time for an hour-and-a-half ride on the Mesabi Trail before the sun goes down.

Now, from his powerful perch as chair of the House Transportation Committee, Oberstar has slipped a provision into the Federal Aviation Administration's reauthorization bill that allows airports to spend federal funds on bike storage facilities.

The bike industry is cheering the amendment as a victory, but some think it goes too far in writing one's own enthusiasms into law.

Oberstar is proud of the work he has done for cycling. In nine years, he says, ridership on the Paul Bunyan Trail in north-central Minnesota has increased from 40,000 to 650,000 this year. Oberstar's committee oversees trail funding.

"Every bed and breakfast, or nearly every one, has doubled in size," Oberstar said. "The trail's Dairy Queen has tripled in size. For me, it's a great delight to see people flocking for the trail."

Oberstar estimated that he has helped win funding and approval for at least 60 trails nationwide. But now he is turning his attention to something a bit more controversial and certainly revolutionary. And it all started in Minneapolis.

## **Airport incident led to action**

When Paul Caspersen, a Minneapolis resident, left his bike at Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport last year, it ended up being destroyed by airport personnel. Oberstar read about the incident in the Star Tribune and called Gary Sjoquist to help piece the bike together.

Sjoquist is the bike industry's only lobbyist and calls Oberstar the "real deal" and his "go-to guy" in Congress. Sjoquist, who works for Quality Bike Products in Bloomington, uses Oberstar to talk to groups around the country about grass-roots advocacy for bike trails. Oberstar typically has one request: a high-end road bike to zip around the city.

"He would come out just as a cyclist who happened to be a very powerful member of Congress on an important committee," Sjoquist said.

Oberstar drafted the airport bike amendment in response to Caspersen's experience. He believes it will pass the House before the August recess.

Keith Ashdown, the vice president for Taxpayers for Common Sense, sees the provision as an example of lavish spending.

"It's not the most outrageous kind, but he has a personal fascination or fixation with biking," Ashdown said. "Generally, when you're trying to fill a transportation need, there's a growing demand. It isn't a demand when you can count the people on one hand."

The bike storage authorization merely allows the airports to use federal money for cycling; it does not mandate it. Local cycling clubs will need to lobby airport commissions for the units to be constructed. Oberstar said that he has word the Twin Cities airport will construct the facilities and that one airport on the West Coast is already in the process.

## **Biking gains momentum**

For Ashdown, a frequent critic of Oberstar's transportation spending, most of the congressman's plans for cycling have been self-indulgent.

"We probably have more bike paths per mile, per capita in his district than anywhere in the universe," he says.

But for Sjoquist -- whose political action committee donated \$8,000 to Oberstar's reelection bid -- the quest to fill the cycling coffers is just beginning. Sjoquist is trying to find Republicans to back Oberstar's effort for cycling. So far, he has the support of Minnesota Republican Sen. Norm Coleman, and Maine Republicans Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins.

"I'm looking for people on appropriation committees," Sjoquist said. "Just need a few good Republicans who can get things done."

Oberstar said that shouldn't be a problem. In the 2005 highway funding bill, 70 percent of House members requested bicycling facilities.

And Sjoquist thinks it's all worth it. "We need to get kids on bikes to school, remind them they have legs."

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The Times Argus

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<http://www.timesargus.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070605/NEWS01/706050359/1002>

## Federal money for Vt. highways, bridges may sit idle

*By Louis Porter  
Vermont Press Bureau*

MONTPELIER — Local and state officials are trying to figure out how to pay for highway and bridge projects included in federal funding, but not near the top of the Agency of Transportation's priorities.

In some cases, those projects were requested by local governments or other groups without state agreement or knowledge, and those municipalities or organizations will have to find local "match" money on their own or wait until the construction projects move up in the state's priority list.

"It is their project, they wanted the money, and we have agreements with all of them that they will fund the local match themselves," said John Zicconi, spokesman for the agency.

Other projects, like bridges in Springfield and Barre Town, will have their local matches paid for by the state — but it may be some time before that happens.

"We will work toward them, but it will take some time to get them through engineering" and planning, Zicconi said. "We will not take them out of turn in the priority system, but when they are ready to go the money will be there."

It is not clear exactly how many of the 100-plus projects with dedicated federal "earmark" money will not be funded with state dollars, or will have to wait. In large part that is because the state still is evaluating some of them and will pay some share in many cases.

Among them are the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail, a path for snowmobiles and other uses. The local match in that case will be met by the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers, Zicconi said.

Other projects not included in the state plan to pay local match money include waterfront and Church Street improvements in Burlington, and the creation of a battlefield monument in Cedar Creek, Va. How the local match money in that project will be paid for now is being worked out with the State of Virginia, since coordination of the project has been transferred there, Zicconi said.

The agency sets priorities for projects based on a system that only is a few years old, and which takes into account a variety of considerations. Among them are the safety of the bridge or road, what local planning agencies say about the project, traffic volume and other factors.

That may mean some projects wait, unless local money can be found to match any federal investment.

"There are a number of community projects that if they were not in the 10 years transportation plan are being passed up," said Sen. Vincent Illuzzi, R-Essex/Orleans. "These are projects that Vermonters went to (U.S. Sen. James Jeffords) and said we would like to get help for our communities."

Zicconi said the federal transportation earmark money will be used.

"Nobody wanted to leave federal money on the table," he said. "We believe they will all be used. It will take some time."

But some worry there will be disagreements as towns try to get match funding for their projects.

"There were a number of projects that were not part of the administration's vision," said Sen. Phil Scott, R-Washington, a member of the Transportation Committee. "Some municipalities have considered that and decided to move forward and provide their own financing."

"There are going to be a number of them that are going to have to wait if they are going to use state money," he said. "They are all worthwhile projects. It is just difficult to fund some of them when we have essential projects that are not being completed, not being funded at this point."

Some projects, like the Springfield and Barre Town bridges, are not at the top of the state's priority list, but have federal money set aside for them. Mostly, that money is part of the roughly \$1 billion federal highway money negotiated primarily by Jeffords. The state likely will provide much of the local match money for those projects, Zicconi said.

The Bridge Street Bridge over the Stevens Branch of the Winooski River in Barre Town has needed replacement for years. Work on the bridge, including re-paving and re-decking, have helped its condition.

"It's funny how that bridge's condition has improved over the years," said Barre Town Manager Carl Rogers.

But the bridge has remained "functionally obsolete" because it is narrow enough so trucks that cross it have to veer over the centerline. That means that even while the improvements to it have dropped, replacing the bridge lower on the state's priority list, several businesses have had to drive their trucks through more of Barre Town to get to Route 14.

"That increases the trucking time in some cases and puts more strain on the town highways," Rogers said.

So town officials asked Jeffords to help them get federal funding for the bridge replacement, and \$2 million has been set aside for the project.

But it remains unclear who will pay the 20 percent local match. His understanding was that the town would have to issue a bond to pay for it, Rogers said.

Zicconi said the state will pay the match money — but like the Springfield bridge, it may be some time before that happens.

In Springfield, the Community Center Bridge also needs to be replaced.

Construction on the bridge is expected to begin in 2010, said Town Manager Bob Forguites.

"It is not soon enough for the bridge," he said. "It's something that should be done right now, but we don't have local money to do it with."

In the end, the 20 percent local match for the \$1 million in federal money likely will be matched with 5 percent town money and the remainder in state money, Forguites said.

"We knew we were going to be responsible for some amount of local match," he said.

The federal money does not disappear if it is not used — but neither does it grow with inflation.

So some worry that delaying projects could cause the state or local taxpayers to end up footing more of the bill.

"It is a concern with all of our projects. The longer we wait, the more it costs," Scott said.

Meanwhile, a daunting and growing number of projects remain to be done.

"That is part of our dilemma with our infrastructure. We didn't keep up," Scott said.

And a larger problem is that the local funding of the federal transportation earmarks over the next several years comes while the state's transportation revenue — especially from gas taxes and purchase and use taxes — are not growing as fast as expected.

"Our revenues are not meeting the forecasts, which is what our budget is based on," Zicconi said. "(They have) not increased as much as they thought they would."

Income into the transportation fund is \$13 million below what was expected when state economists forecast growth in revenue last year. Even after giving transportation an additional shot of \$3 million from an anticipated surplus into the general fund, the fund remains \$10 million short of expectations.

In part, that is because Vermont's gas tax does not increase with the price of fuel, while the amount used has been in decline.

"We can't maintain the roads with declining revenues. Nobody wants to raise a fee or a tax, but something has to be done," Illuzzi said. "I think we need to come up with a creative funding mechanism to draw down these federal funds."

Contact Louis Porter at [louis.porter@rutlandherald.com](mailto:louis.porter@rutlandherald.com).

*Strings Attached*

## As Earmarked Funding Swells, Some Recipients Don't Want It

Money for Wildlife Bridge Vexes Colorado Officials;  
A Debate Over Priorities Roadkill Problem at Vail Pass

By BRODY MULLINS

VAIL PASS, Colo. -- More than 10,000 feet up in the Rocky Mountains, planning is under way for a multimillion-dollar bridge that will be as wide as a football field and covered with grass and shrubs. Dirt berms along its edges will reduce noise and lights from vehicles whizzing below on Interstate 70.

The overpass isn't for cars or people. It's designed to help elk, coyote and other wildlife cross the four-lane highway over the Continental Divide without becoming roadkill.



2006 DIGITAL ANIMATION SERVICES (DAS).  
Early plans for a wildlife overpass on Interstate 70 near Vail Pass, Colo.

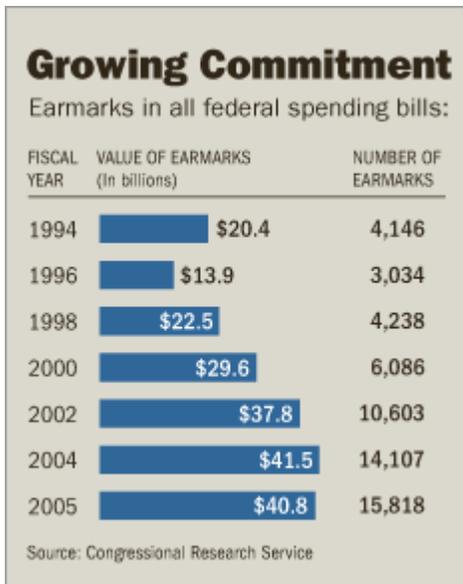
Colorado Republican Sen. Wayne Allard and Democratic Rep. Mark Udall snagged the first chunk of funding for the bridge using a popular tactic for home-state projects: the congressional spending earmark. They got a stipulation tacked onto last year's federal transportation-spending bill directing \$500,000 of federal money to the project, delighting the local environmental group that had championed it.

But the reaction at the Colorado Department of Transportation, the direct recipient of the federal money, was far different. "Earmarks make my life miserable," says Tom Norton, the agency's head. And in fact, many federal and state officials whose agencies receive earmarked money say they don't want it.

The problem, they say, is that most earmarks don't come with extra money from Washington. They merely dictate how agencies must spend federal money they were already counting on. Mr. Norton says the wildlife bridge is a waste of money that could divert federal funds from more pressing highway projects. His department never agreed to fund it. Earmarks, he complains, force him to use limited federal money to pay for lawmakers' pet projects.

The head of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration recently told Congress that earmarks are "eroding NASA's ability to carry out its mission." The governor of South Carolina doesn't want a \$150 million earmark for a bridge over a lake in his state.

This summer, the Bush administration said a \$340 million earmark to build a backup



engine for a new fighter jet "would hamper" the Pentagon's ability to deliver the jet on time. The White House called on Congress to "eliminate unjustified earmarks for lower priority items and restore requests funded for priority programs."

Traditionally, annual funding bills passed by Congress set broad spending priorities, but left it to the executive branch and to states to decide how to meet those goals. When earmarks were tacked onto those bills, they came primarily from committee chairmen or veteran lawmakers with clout.

Earmarks allow lawmakers to fund projects fast, with little public scrutiny. These days, their use is mushrooming. Congressional leaders are using them

to help vulnerable junior colleagues curry favor with home-state constituents to boost re-election efforts. Earmarks grease the skids for important legislation -- bills loaded with spending provisions that benefit numerous congressional districts tend to garner more votes. In recent years, Republican leaders have offered lessons for newly elected lawmakers in how to get earmarks.

In the 1980s, President Reagan vetoed a transportation authorization bill because it contained a few hundred earmarks. Last year's version included more than 6,000, including \$223 million for a bridge to a sparsely populated Alaskan island -- the oft-mocked "Bridge to Nowhere." In the fiscal year ended Sept. 30, 2005, there were 15,818 earmarks in all federal spending bills, up from about 3,034 in fiscal 1996, according to the research arm of Congress, the Congressional Research Service.

### Rewards for Lawmakers

Leaders in both parties use earmarks to reward lawmakers. For example, Pennsylvania Democratic Rep. John Murtha, who will be chairman of the defense spending panel, won't allow members to add earmarks to the defense-spending bill unless they agree to support it, according to aides on the appropriations committee. This year's defense bill, which included nearly 3,000 earmarks, took a mere 20 minutes to pass the House in October.

Megan Grote, a spokeswoman for Mr. Murtha, says that "members of Congress who appreciate the synergy between local communities and the [Department of Defense] are much more likely to support the bill, and that is the essential goal -- to get members to support the defense bill."

Earmarks made up about \$40.8 billion, or 4%, of the roughly \$1 trillion that Congress allocated in the 2005 fiscal year. Federal prosecutors in Washington, Los Angeles and San Diego are looking into potential abuses, including whether lawmakers have added

earmarks to benefit political contributors, former staffers and friendly lobbyists. At least four congressmen, including Rep. Jerry Lewis, the current chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, are being investigated for their roles in earmarking or their ties to lobbyists specializing in earmarks.

Some congressmen have called for abolishing earmarks altogether, but there is widespread doubt that major change will occur. Rep. Alan Mollohan, a West Virginia Democrat, is under federal investigation for steering hundreds of millions of dollars in earmarks to nonprofit groups run by friends, former staffers and business partners. He will take charge of the appropriations subcommittee that oversees law-enforcement agencies. Mr. Murtha, who opposes changes to the system, will take over the powerful defense appropriations subcommittee.



A rendering of the proposed Colorado wildlife overpass.

Ten years ago, there were almost no earmarks in transportation funds sent to Colorado. State officials were able to set priorities knowing they would have almost complete discretion of how to use the money. By 2000, federal lawmakers had earmarked 2% of Colorado's federal transportation funds. Today, 13% of those funds are earmarked.

Interest groups have discovered that earmarks can be a quick way to get funding without having to deal with the normal bureaucratic process. The Southern Rockies Ecosystem Project, an environmental advocacy organization with offices throughout the state, is one such group.

Earlier this month, near mile-marker 185 on Interstate 70 outside Vail, Monique DiGiorgio, the group's director of development and communication, strapped on snowshoes and trudged into the nearby woods in search of one of four motion-triggered cameras the group has set up to monitor animal activity close to the road.

The highway already has several underpasses, called spanned bridges, which allow animals to pass under the highway. Ms. DiGiorgio says different types of animals like to cross the road in different ways. "An overpass has an openness factor that deer and elk prefer, while mountain lions and black bears prefer the underpass," she says. "If you have multiple crossing structure types, you are increasing the chances that a greater diversity of species will find safe passage."

The 2.3-million-acre White River National Forest here is home to black bears, mountain lions, deer, coyotes, wolves, moose, herds of bighorn sheep and the nation's largest population of elk. The threatened Canadian lynx was reintroduced in 2000, and more than 200 now live in the state's mountains.

Ms. DiGiorgio and other environmentalists refer to I-70 as the "Berlin Wall" for

## Dedicated Funds

Earmarks in annual Department of Transportation spending bill:

FISCAL YEAR	VALUE OF EARMARKS (In billions)	NUMBER OF EARMARKS
1994	\$0.9	140
1996	\$0.8	167
1998	\$1.2	147
2000	\$1.3	641
2002	\$3.2	1,493
2004	\$3.4	2,282
2005	\$3.3	2,094

Source: Congressional Research Service

Colorado's wildlife. When winter approaches, snow forces deer and elk to lower altitudes to graze. Predators follow. To travel down the valley, the animals must cross the highway.

Many don't make it. From 1993 to 2003, more than 80 animals were killed by motorists on a 14-mile stretch of the highway outside Vail, including elk, deer, moose, mountain lions and black bears, according to state records. Among the victims were two of the threatened lynx, one of which was found by the side of the road with its radio collar around its neck.

"People coming to Vail don't want to see a lot of mangled animals on the road. It's kind of a downer," says Susan Pollack, a Vail resident who

helps monitor the cameras as part of an effort to assemble data about wildlife movement.

The idea for the animal bridge came from Canada. Roadkill along a stretch of the Trans-Canadian Highway declined 80% after the government constructed two wildlife overpasses and nearly two dozen underpasses and erected fencing along the road, according to the government.

Ms. DiGiorgio put together a coalition of environmental groups to support an overpass near Vail, raised \$100,000 from supporters and won backing from Vail and surrounding Eagle County.

But state transportation officials expressed no interest in funding the project. "I think there are more efficient ways to get the animals across the road in that pass that would be much less expensive and still satisfy the wildlife need," says Mr. Norton. There already are plenty of underpasses for the animals, he says. A more feasible idea, he says, would be to put up fences along the road to route animals to the underpasses.

Colorado spends about \$1 billion a year on transportation projects, with about 40% coming from the federal government. By law, Mr. Norton and the state's department of transportation decide how to spend that money. Each year, the state's 271 cities and 64 counties request funding for hundreds of projects worth billions of dollars. Mr. Norton, a Republican appointed by the governor, and his staff sort through the proposals and develop a list of priorities. That process takes about 18 months.

When Congress sends funds to Colorado from the annual transportation-appropriations bill, Mr. Norton allocates the money, beginning with the top priority, until the funds run out.

The animal bridge has never made the state's list of priorities. At a meeting in late 2004,



Tom Norton

Ms. DiGiorgio says, she won the support of Mr. Udall, who represents the area in Congress. Mr. Udall agreed to ask the Appropriations Committee for an earmark to get the overpass off the ground. Ms. DiGiorgio later won the backing of the state's two senators, Mr. Allard, a Republican, and Sen. Ken Salazar, a Democrat.

In November 2005, a provision was added to that year's \$66 billion federal transportation-funding bill requiring \$500,000 to be spent conducting a study on building the Colorado wildlife overpass. Mr. Allard took credit in a press release. The project, he said, would "make Vail Pass a safer place for both drivers and wildlife."

Not all members of Colorado's congressional delegation were pleased. Rep. Tom Tancredo, a fiscally conservative Republican, wondered how animals would find the bridge. "Will there be bright arrows pointing the way? Or will we hire Dr. Dolittle to translate directions into bear and deer language?" he asked in a press release.

### **'We Hate Earmarks'**

The earmark was one of dozens worth \$63 million that Colorado's transportation department must implement. "We hate earmarks," says Heather Copp, the department's chief financial officer, who keeps a tally of them in a thick black binder in her office. The bridge earmark, she says, "has now taken money that would have been spent somewhere else."

"Why do we spend 18 months at public hearings, meetings and planning sessions to put together our statewide plan if Congress is going to earmark projects that displace our priorities?" she asks.

State transportation officials have written a memo to Colorado's newly elected governor arguing that earmarks have so undermined the state's transportation planning process that the state needs a new system for allocating funds. They plan to travel to Washington in February to explain to Colorado lawmakers and others in Congress how earmarks disrupt the planning process.

The \$500,000 earmarked for the wildlife-bridge study will come from a special pot of federal money and will not eat into the state's regular allocation of federal transportation dollars. But Mr. Norton worries that if construction of the bridge goes forward, the total cost could reach \$10 million. And unless Congress allocates additional money, the state will have to foot the bill. Mr. Udall's spokesman says there are no current plans to seek additional funding.

"How do we come up with another \$9.5 million?" Mr. Norton asks. The only way, he says, is to "displace a project that went through the normal priority process."

Despite his objections to the project, Mr. Norton feels he has no choice but to spend the \$500,000 on the study. "Once you get money in your hand, you can't give it back," he says. "How do you tell your constituents who are breathing down your back, and the state and local legislators who want the money, that you don't want it and are giving it back? Someone in my position wouldn't be around long."

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